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SUBJECT: FADHILA LEADERS OFFER THOUGHTS ON POLITICAL
CRISIS, BASRAH

REF: BAGHDAD 1773

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) In an August 5 meeting with the Ambassador, Fadhila leaders Hassan al-Shammari and Bassim al-Sherif expressed skepticism about the "group of four" (i.e., ISCI, Dawa, KDP, and PUK). While not against new movement on the political front, they argued that the group of four was not offering new and politically inclusive proposals but rather was "provoking" other parties by its uncompromising position on Article 140 and its support for a Shi'a region in the south. Ascribing the current political impasse to a lack of true partnership, al-Shammari proposed that the current ministers offer their resignations; that Prime Minister Maliki choose technocrats in consultation with the political parties and submit them to the CoR for approval by secret ballot (so that CoR members could vote their conscience rather than follow the party line); that the CoR dissolve itself and hold early elections as soon as an election law based on an open list or direct representation system was enacted; and that accountability and oversight functions be strengthened by moving Inspectors General from the executive branch to an independent commission linked to the CoR. The Ambassador replied that the U.S. supported Prime Minister Maliki and his government because stability in the government was in Iraqi and U.S. interests during this critical period.

¶2. (C) Al-Shammari then outlined Fadhila's concerns over Basrah. He argued that the vote of no confidence in the governor was not valid because it did not meet the two-thirds threshold, was not conducted transparently, and did not follow mechanisms laid out in CPA 71. Al-Shammari said the Prime Minister was bowing to pressure from colleagues in the UIC to act against the governor, even though the PM had nothing against the governor personally. Al-Shammari noted that UIC parties were suspicious of Fadhila's good relationship with GCC countries and believed the Gulf states might be funding Fadhila. He claimed that Fadhila received its funding largely from party dues (including one-half the salary of each Fadhila CoR member) and that Fadhila was against a large Shi'a region in the south not in deference to Arab countries but because Fadhila thought it would compromise the independence of Iraq's Shi'a.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador noted the importance of finding a lasting solution to various problems in Basrah and asked if Fadhila would be open to a deal that replaced the current governor, for example, with another Fadhila member acceptable to other parties. Al-Shammari replied that Fadhila was in discussion with the UIC on Basrah. While Fadhila was open to the sort of solution the Ambassador outlined, he claimed, it was important that the UIC cease "provocations and escalations." Noting that there was a bias among current ministers toward Najaf and Karbala and that no key ministers had visited Basrah in the last year

except for the Minister of Oil, Al-Shammari reasoned that the central government and UIC wanted to see Fadhila fail in Basrah.

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